

Jan. 31, 2011, Hearing on SB 831, Env. Committee

Statement of Jean Trapani, 12 Warnock Dr., Westport, CT 06880

I am among those who ask the General Assembly to preserve public access to municipal lands for recreational purposes by restoring to our towns the liability protection that is available to State and private landowners. I support SB 831.

For people who enjoy walking, running, hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, bird-watching, rock or ice climbing, and kayaking or canoeing outdoors, more restrictions on already very limited outdoor space in CT seem to be a terrible punishment, especially for those of us who have done nothing wrong! CT citizens want to spend more time outside for health, relaxation, and a sense of well-being, and retailers are responding. We now have stores such as LL Bean in two locations, REI in two locations, the continued success of Eastern Mountain Sports in seven locations, Dick's Sporting Goods in nine locations, Action Sports in two locations, Cabela's, Patagonia, and hundreds of other stores offering similar gear, many of them family-owned.

For us, it is critically important to have a freedom of place to enjoy these activities in an era of diminished access often due to increasing financial restrictions. Less money coming in to state coffers means less maintenance for public places such as parks, possibly decreased hours and certainly it will cost more for the average person to enter. Less money coming in to a family from jobs means they cannot travel far and a staycation may be their only option. Less money being donated to not-for-profits means that they cannot offer the same recreational opportunities they used to, so a conservation group may lose land, trails may become overgrown, information in the form of websites, leaflets and guide books may diminish, which will negatively influence opportunities to get outside. Even faith-based organizations are losing property and consolidating their organizational structures, removing more opportunities for families to have local replenishment of spirit.

If there were ever a time when outdoor activities were needed desperately as a relieving antidote to the steady electronic throbbing assault from phones, radio, oversized media monitors in homes, highways, and even hospitals, fax machines, and computers, it is now. So let us all support efforts to:

- a. successfully connect with the nature of life which sustains us emotionally, physically and mentally,
- b. requires us to accept personal responsibility for our actions, and
- c. rid ourselves of non-substantive lawsuits which are not for the greater good but rather singular personal enrichment.